

§Appl. No. 09/996,808
Amdt. dated August 12, 2003
Reply to Office Action of May 13, 2003

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 remain in this application, claim 1 having been amended to further clarify the term "tapered portion" appearing therein.

Applicants express their sincere appreciation for the suggestions for improving the form of claim 1. These suggestions have been adopted in their entirety.

Claims 1-8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ager et al. '677 in view of Brown '767. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Ager does not disclose the following limitation in independent claim 1 with respect to the unitary body:

"a tapered portion on the unitary body extending from the groove in a direction away from the radial flange."

There is no such structure in either Ager et al. '677 or Brown '767. Consequently, the claimed invention is not obviousness in view of this combination of references since the references neither teach nor suggest, individually or in combination, this claimed limitation.

Applicant's tapered portion 72 extends from the groove 68 and is therefore on the same surface of the unitary body as the groove 68. It is respectfully submitted that there is no corresponding tapered surface on Brown '767 because the only surface in Brown '767, which appears to have a taper, would be the outer surface on portion 130 of the body 60. However, this surface tapers in a direction opposite Applicants' claimed taper and clearly does not extend from a groove.

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Applicants have amended claim 1 to further make the difference clear by stating that the tapered portion has a surface tapering in a direction away from the flange and toward the axis. However, claim 1 as filed distinguishes over the combination without the clarifying amendment since neither reference discloses the claimed "tapered portion."

Applicants have also amended claim 1 to include the term "axis" and to say that the gasket is "annular" and that associated structure is "annular", all of which is explicit by the filter element being described as "annular".

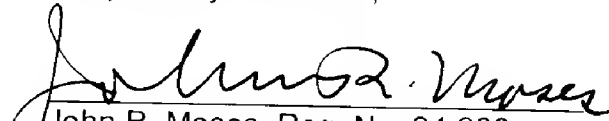
Claims 2-8 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons as claim 1 since each of these claims further limit claim 1.

In that this is a full and complete response to the Office Action of May 13, 2003, Applicant respectfully requests that this application be allowed and passed to issue. If the Examiner for any reason feels that a personal conference with Applicant's Attorneys might expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned locally.

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The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted,


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JRM/jmj